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California Classics Series

Charles Warren Stoddard

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CALIFORNIA CLASSICS SERIES

Charles Warren Stoddard



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Charles Warren Stoddard

Apostrophe to the Skylark

The Bells of San Gabriel

Joe of Lahaina

Father Damien Among His Lepers

An Appreciation of

Charles Warren Stoddard

By George Wharton James



Arroyo Guild Press, Los Angeles, California

25/5/78

The figure shows a map of the study area divided into three horizontal sections labeled 'North', 'Middle', and 'South'. Sampling points are indicated by small circles with numbers. In the North section, there are 8 points numbered 1 through 8. In the Middle section, there are 10 points numbered 9 through 18. In the South section, there are 17 points numbered 19 through 35. The points are distributed across various locations within each section, representing different sampling sites.

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CHARLES WARREN STODDARD

Rest to thy valiant soul, oft tempest-tossed,
That never for an hour its anchor lost,
But clasped Faith's standard closer, day by day,
Through every turning of thy checkered way.
Thou who didst joy in every beauteous thing,
Thy pulses tuned to every throb of spring,
Thou who didst suffer as that mortal must,
Whose winged footsteps soar above the dust!
Serpentine word-artist, whose bright pen could paint
All Nature's moods—a savage or a saint,—
Leading us spell-bound with thy harmonies
Through Northern glades, o'er languorous Southern Seas,
Welcomed and sheltered safe at last thou art,
In God's deep harbor—Rest thee, troubled heart!
—Mary E. Mannix.

INTRODUCTION

THIS is the first of a series of California Classics, to be issued monthly, or as often as demand arises. Each issue will consist of selections from the work of some California author that are deemed specially worthy and appropriate for this series, and will generally be followed by a short sketch of the life or appreciation of the work of the author. It is the intention to include in the series (provided the plan meets with public approval) W. C. Bartlett, John Muir, Edward Rowland Sill, Luther Burbank, Prentice Mulford, Sarah Carmichel, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Ina Coolbrith, W. L. Manly, Frances Fuller Victor, Joaquin Miller, Ambrose Bierce, Edwin Markham, Clarence King, Gertrude Atherton, Millicent Shinn, Gelett Burgess, Wallace Irwin, Charles F. Lummis, George Sterling, Frank Norris, Jack London, Mary Austin, Frank Pixley, Hubert Howe Bancroft, Robert J. Burdette, Virginia Reed Murphy, Edward W. Townsend (Chimmie Fadden), Charles Frederick Holder, Noah Brooks, Herman Scheffauer, Palmer Cox, R. W. Tully, Eleanor Gates, Herman Whitaker, Idaho M. Strobbridge, Josephine Clifford McCrackin, Geraldine Bonner, Frances Charles, Miriam Michelson, Henry George, Walter Colton, Ross Browne, P. V. Mighels, Paul Shoup, Stewart Edward White, Theo. H. Hittell, David Starr Jordan, Charles Keeler, James King of Wm., Padre Palou, Wm. H. Rhodes (Caxton), Starr King, Willis George Emerson, Chas. K. Field, John Vance Cheney, Adeline Knapp, John S. McGroarty, W.

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E. Smythe, Belle E. Smith, Jerome Hart, Bailey Millard, Sam Davis, Louis Alexander Robinson, Bartholomew Dowling, Elizabeth Grinnell, Joseph LeConte, Richard Realf, Harriet Skidmore, Edward Pollock, Margaret Collier Graham. Edward Robeson Taylor, Olive Thorne Miller, T. S. VanDyke, Madge Morris Wagner, Herbert Bashford, Sharlot Hall, Lionel Josaphare, Lorenzo Sosso, and others.

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APOSTROPHE TO THE SKYLARK

Charles Warren Stoddard

1900

1900



APOSTROPHE TO THE SKYLARK

I crossed the railroad in the midst of one of the meadows, and having got safely into the meadow beyond, I came to a land of peace, where sheep were munching young grass, up to their eyes in wool. They muched and munched and stared with their blank, shallow, buttonlike eyes that seemed to be sewed into their ridiculous faces, all the while standing so still it seemed as if their stilt-like legs must have been driven a little way into the sod. There is a long path over the meadow—one cannot help following it with some cheerfulness, for unnumbered pilgrims have beaten it down with much passing to and fro—and, before many steps are taken, Stratford is forgotten, and there is nothing left in all the world so dear as the short sweet grass, the browsing sheep, the hedges, and the song-birds. In the midst of lush grass, compassed about by limitless greensward, the trees whose bark was black with rain, and more of those bland-faced sheep, I heard a voice that was as a new interpretation of nature—a piping,

Oil of the olive was thine;
 Flood of the wine-press flowing;
 Blood o' the Christ was the wine—
 Blood o' the Lamb that was slain.
 Thy gifts were fast o' the King
 Forever coming as going
 Far over the hills, the thousand hills—
 Their lowing a soft refrain.
 What then wert thou, is what art now?
 Answer me, once again!

And every note of every bell
 Rang Gabriel! rang Gabriel!
 In the tower that is left the tale to tell
 Of Gabriel, the Archangel.

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Seed o' the corn was thine —
 Body of Him thus broken
 And mingled with blood o' the vine
 The bread as the wine of life;
 Out of the good sunshine
 They were given to thee as a token,
 The body of Him, as the blood of Him;
 When the gifts of God were ripe
 What then wert thou, as what art now;
 After the weary strife?

And every note of every bell
 Rang Gabriel! rang Gabriel!
 In the tower that is left the tale to tell
 Of Gabriel, the Archangel.

Where are they now, O, bells?
 Where are the fruits of the mission?
 Garnered where no one dwells,
 Shepherd and flock are fled.
 O'er the Lord's vineyard swells
 The tide that with full perdition
 Sounded their doom and fashioned their tomb
 And buried them with the dead
 What then overt thou, as what art now?
 The answer is still unsaid.

And every note of every bell
 Sang Gabriel! sang Gabriel!
 In the tower that is left the tale to tell
 Of Gabriel, the Archangel

Where are they now, O tower!
The locusts as wild honey?
Where is the sacred dome
That the bride of Christ was given?
Gone to the wielders of power
The wisers as minters of money;
Gone for the greed that is their creed -
And these in the land have thrown.
What then wilt thou, as what art now,
And wherefore hast thou striven?

And every note of every bell
Sang Gabriel! rang Gabriel!
In the tower that is left the tale to tell
Of Gabriel, the Archangel.

Chas Warren Stoddard

Monterey, California 1906.

THE BELLS OF SAN GABRIEL

Charles Warren Stoddard

From The Sunset Magazine

Thine was the corn and the wine,
The blood of the grape that nourished;
The blossom and fruit of the vine
That was heralded far away.
These were thy gifts; and thine,
When the vine and the fig-tree flourished,
The promise of peace or of glad increase
Forever and ever and aye.
What then wert thou, and what art now?
Answer me, O, I pray!
And every note of every bell
Sang Gabriel! rang Gabriel!
In the tower that is left the tale to tell
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Oil of the olive was thine;
Flood of the wine-press flowing;
Blood o' the Christ was the wine—
Blood o' the Lamb that was slain.
Thy gifts were fat o' the kine
Forever coming and going
Far over the hills, the thousand hills—
Their lowing a soft refrain.
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 The bread and the wine of life;
Out of the good sunshine
 They were given to thee as a token,
The body of Him, and the blood of Him,
 When the gifts of God were rife.
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 After the weary strife?

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Charles Warren Stoddard

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Sang Gabriel! rang Gabriel!
In the tower that is left the tale to tell
Of Gabriel, the Archangel.

Chas. Warren Stoddard.

Monterey, California, 1906.

JOE OF LAHAINA

Charles Warren Stoddard



JOE OF LAHAINA

I WAS stormed in at Lahaina. Now, Lahaina is a little slice of civilization, beached on the shore of barbarism. One can easily stand that little of it, for brown and brawny heathendom becomes more wonderful and captivating by contrast. So I was glad of dear, drowsy, little Lahaina; and was glad, also, that she had but one broad street, which possibly led to destruction, and yet looked lovely in the distance. It didn't matter to me that the one broad street had but one side to it; for the sea lapped over the sloping sands on its lower edge, and the sun used to set right in the face of every solitary citizen of Lahaina, just as he went to supper.

I was waiting to catch a passage in a passing schooner, and that's why I came there; but the schooner flashed by us in a great gale from the south, and so I was stormed in indefinitely.

It was Holy Week, and I concluded to go to housekeeping, because it would be so nice to have my frugal meals in private, to go to mass

and vespers daily, and then to come back and feel quite at home. My villa was suburban—built of dried grasses on the model of a haystack dug out in the middle, with doors and windows let into the four sides thereof. It was planted in the midst of a vineyard, with avenues stretching in all directions under a network of stems and tendrils.

“Her breath is sweeter than the sweet winds
That breathe over the grape-blossoms of Lahaina.”

So the song said; and I began to think upon the surpassing sweetness of that breath, as I inhaled the sweet winds of Lahaina, while the wilderness of its vineyards blossomed like the rose. I used to sit in my veranda and turn to Joe (Joe was my private and confidential servant), and I would say to Joe, while we scented the odor of grape, and saw the great banana-leaves waving their cambric sails, and heard the sea moaning in the melancholy distance—I would say to him,

Charles Warren Stoddard

"Joe, housekeeping is good fun, isn't it?" Whereupon Joe would utter a sort of unanimous Yes, with his whole body and soul; so that question was carried triumphantly, and we would relapse into a comfortable silence, while the voices of the wily singers down on the river front would whisper to us, and cause us to wonder what they could possibly be doing at that moment in the broad way that led to destruction. Then we would take a drink of cocoa-milk, and finish our bananas, and go to bed, because we had nothing else to do.

This is the way that we began our co-operative housekeeping: One night, when there was a riotous sort of festival off in a retired valley, I saw, in the excited throng of natives who were going mad over their national dance, a young face that seemed to embody a whole tropical romance. On another night, when a lot of us were bathing in the moonlight, I saw a figure so fresh and joyous that I began to realize how the old Greeks could worship mere physical beauty and

forget its higher forms. Then I discovered that face on this body—a rare enough combination—and the whole constituted Joe, a young scapegrace who was schooling at Lahaina, under the eye—not a very sharp one—of his uncle. When I got stormed in, and resolved on housekeeping for a season, I took Joe, bribing his uncle to keep the peace, which he promised to do, provided I gave bonds for Joe's irreproachable conduct while with me. I willingly gave bonds—verbal ones—for this was just what I wanted of Joe: namely, to instil into his youthful mind those counsels which, if rigorously followed, must result in his becoming a true and unterrified American. This compact settled, Joe took up his bed—a roll of mats—and down we marched to my villa, and began housekeeping in good earnest.

We soon got settled, and began to enjoy life, though we were not without occasional domestic infelicities. For instance, Joe would wake up in the middle of the night, declaring to me that it was morn-

ing, and thereupon insist upon sweeping out at once, and in the most vigorous manner. Having filled the air with dust, he would rush off to the baker's for our hot rolls and a pat of breakfast butter, leaving me, meantime, to recover as I might. Having settled myself for a comfortable hour's reading, bolstered up in a luxurious fashion, Joe would enter with breakfast, and orders to the effect that it be eaten at once and without delay. It was useless for me to remonstrate with him; he was tyrannical.

He got me into all sorts of trouble. It was Holy Week, and I had resolved upon going to mass and vespers daily. I went. The soft night-winds floated in through the latticed windows of the chapel, and made the candles flicker upon the altar. The little throng of natives bowed in the oppressive silence, and were deeply moved. It was rest for the soul to be there; yet, in the midst of it all, while the Father, with his pale, sad face, gave his instructions, to which we listened as

attentively as possible—for there was something in his manner and his voice that made us better creatures—while we listened, in the midst of it I heard a shrill little whistle, a sort of chirp, that I knew perfectly well. It was Joe, sitting on a cocoa-stump in the garden adjoining, and beseeching me to come out, right off. When service was over I remonstrated with him for his irreverence. “Joe,” I said, “if you have no respect for religion yourself, respect those who are more fortunate than you.” But Joe was dressed in his best, and quite wild at the entrancing loveliness of the night. “Let’s walk a little,” said Joe, covered with fragrant wreaths, and redolent of cocoanut-oil. What could I do? If I had tried to do anything to the contrary, he might have taken me and thrown me away somewhere into a well or a jungle, and then I could no longer hope to touch the chord of remorse—which chord I sought vainly, and which I have since concluded was not in Joe’s physical corporation at all. So we walked a little.

In vain I strove to break Joe of the shocking habit of whistling me out of vespers. He would persist in doing it. Moreover, during the day he would collect crusts of bread and banana-skins, station himself in ambush behind the curtain of the window next the lane, and, as some solitary creature strode solemnly past, Joe would discharge a volley of ammunition over him, and then laugh immoderately at his indignation and surprise. Joe was my pet elephant, and I was obliged to play with him very cautiously.

One morning he disappeared. I was without the consolation of a breakfast, even. I made my toilet, went to my portmanteau for my purse—for I had decided upon a visit to the baker—when lo! part of my slender means had mysteriously disappeared. Joe was gone, and the money also. All day I thought about it. In the morning, after a very long and miserable night, I woke up, and when I opened my eyes, there, in the doorway, stood Joe, in a brand-new suit of clothes,

including boots and hat. He was gorgeous beyond description, and seemed overjoyed to see me, and as merry as though nothing unusual had happened. I was quite startled at this apparition. "Joseph!" I said in my severest tone, and then turned over and looked away from him. Joe evaded the subject in the most delicate manner, and was never so interesting as at that moment. He sang his specialties, and played clumsily upon his bamboo flute—to soothe me, I suppose—and wanted me to eat a whole flat pie which he had brought home as a peace-offering, buttoned tightly under his jacket. I saw I must strike at once, if I struck at all; so I said, "Joe, what on earth did you do with that money?" Joe said he had replenished his wardrobe, and bought the flat pie especially for me. "Joseph," I said, with great dignity, "do you know that you have been stealing, and that it is highly sinful to steal, and may result in something unpleasant in the world to come?" Joe said, "Yes," pleasantly, though I hardly think

he meant it; and then he added, mildly, "that he couldn't lie"—which was a glaring falsehood—"but wanted me to be sure that he took the money, and so had come back to tell me."

"Joseph," I said, "you remind me of our noble Washington;" and, to my amazement, Joe was mortified. He didn't, of course, know who Washington was, but he suspected that I was ridiculing him. He came to the bed and haughtily insisted upon my taking the little change he had received from his customers, but I implored him to keep it, as I had no use at all for it, and, as I had assured him, I much preferred hearing it jingle in his pocket.

The next day I sailed out of Lahaina, and Joe came to the beach with his new trousers tucked into his new boots, while he waved his new hat violently in a final adieu, much to the envy and admiration of a score of hatless urchins, who looked upon Joe as the glass of fashion, and but little lower than the angels. When I entered the boat to set

sail, a tear stood in Joe's bright eye, and I think he was really sorry to part with me; and I don't wonder at it, because our housekeeping experiences were new to him—and, I may add, not unprofitable.

—From South Sea Idylls.

FATHER DAMIEN AMONG HIS LEPERS

Charles Warren Stoddard

FATHER DAMIEN AMONG HIS LEPERS

IN those last days I used to seek the Father and find him, now at the top of a ladder, hammer and nail in hand; or in the garden, or the hospital ward, or the kitchen, or away on a sick-call, as the case might be. It was seldom he could sit with me, for not a moment was he really free. Once I captured him, on a plea of paying my parting call. With the greatest reluctance, and only at my urgent request, he went in search of his decoration. It was found in its neat morocco case, hidden away in an unvisited corner, with the dust an inch thick on it. "It is not for this that I am here," said he, disparagingly; and he acknowledged that he had never put the riband about his neck; indeed he had hardly looked at the bauble since the day when the Bishop desired him to wear it for the gratification of his simple flock.

Once I wandered alone into the chapel; a small organ was standing near an open window; beyond the window was the very pandanus

tree under which Father Damien found shelter when he first came to Kalawao. I sat at the instrument, dreaming over the keys, and thinking of the life one must lead in such a spot; of the need and the lack of human sympathy; of the solitude of the soul destined to a communion with perpetual death—and, hearing a slight rustling near me, I turned, and found the chapel nearly filled with lepers, who had silently stolen in, one after another, at the sound of the organ. The situation was rather startling; but when I asked where Father Damien might be found they directed me, and stood aside to let me pass.

I found him where I might have known he was likely to be found, working bravely among his men, he by far the most industrious of them all. As I approached them unobserved, the bell of the little chapel rang out the Angelus; on the instant they all knelt, uncovered, and in their midst the priest recited the beautiful prayer, to which they responded in soft, low voices,—while the gentle breeze rustled

the broad leaves about them, and the sun poured a flood of glory upon their bowed forms. Lepers all of them, save the good pastor, and soon to follow in the ghastly procession, whose motionless bodies he blesses in their peaceful sleep.

Angelus Domini! Was not that sight pleasing in the eyes of God?

—From The Lepers of Molokai.

CHARLES WARREN STODDARD

George Wharton James



CHARLES WARREN STODDARD

An Appreciation

There is a familiar old adage which reads: "He who has friends must show himself friendly." Never did an old saw find a truer "modern instance" than did this as manifested in the life of the poet-philosopher, Charles Warren Stoddard. He was affectionately termed by thousands of people, "Charlie Stoddard," even by those who had never personally met him, because those who did know him generally gave him this sign of near comradeship and affection. He had a great big heart that was moved to love the Holy Father upon his papal throne, or the poor waif in the streets, and every grade and type between. Aye, he went further, he had love and sympathy to spare for the abused dog or mule whose master did not know enough to appreciate the faithfulness and devotion of these so-called lower animals.

And yet, with all this wealth of affection, he was a poor judge of human nature who imagined that Stoddard was incapable of seeing the failings of men. He was keenly alive to the evil and weak as well as the good and strong, but his soul was so attuned to the sympathy that we call Divine, that he was able to love in spite of the unlovable elements in those with whom he came in contact.

I thus emphasize this feature of the life of Stoddard for I feel that it was one of the chief—if not the chief—element in his wonderfully cosmopolite nature. It explains so many things that the critical cannot understand—as, for instance, his devoted friendship and life with the Sandwich Islanders; his close association with the Bohemian members of the dramatic profession; his intimacy with ascetic priests and the most refined, pure and cultivated women; his “at-homeness” with men of world-renown as statesmen, men-of-letters, artists and the like. He was the intimate friend and bosom companion of Mark Twain; and Kipling, Stevenson, Bret Harte, and scores of other geniuses felt honored as well as charmed by his fellowship and association. For there was not only this great and prime element of loveableness in his make-up, but there were other qualities of mind and soul that appealed strongly to all these differing types of humanity.

One of these was his frank ingenuousness. He was always “as simple as a child.” Anyone who knew him could see his inner heart reflected in every thing he said and wrote, and could well believe the statement he inscribed on the fly-leaf of his “For the Pleasure of His Company,” which he sent to me: “Here you have my confessions. This is one of the truest stories ever told. Do not think me egotistical: I am merely painfully ingenuous.” And he signed this, not only

Charles Warren Stoddard

with his own name, but also with that of the "hero" of the book, Paul Clitheroe.

All of his books, from the first to the last, possess this rare quality. Let us look at them for a moment with this thought mainly in view, for it will be seen to have actually dominated his whole literary life.

"South Sea Idylls" were originally letters of his personal experiences, written to a friend in California, with the expectation that they would be published in one of the San Francisco newspapers. In his own naive and delightfully simple fashion, he tells what he saw, felt and experienced, and it is this fresh, unspoiled, child-heart revealing its inner thought in choice, poetic, epigrammatic, rippling English that gives the main charm to the book.

"Hawaiian Life, or Lazy Letters from Low Latitudes," and "The Island of Tranquil Delights," are similar heart out-pourings of personal experiences in the dear tropic islands he loved so well, as is also "The Lepers of Molokai," the record of the especial work of Father Damien among the poor outcasts on the lonely shores of that sad island.

Few other men could have written such books as his "Exits and Entrances," "In the Footprints of the Padres," and "Over the Rocky Mountains to Alaska," for they are so brim-full of personal matter that with anyone else the reader would

.

feel that the author was a bundle of conceit and egotism. Yet not only do you not feel anything of the kind in reading these books, but, on the contrary, you feel honored and flattered that this keen-brained and poetic man has taken you into his intimate confidence and given you to know how he saw and felt about the things described. Equally so is it with the semi-religious books he wrote: "The Wonder Worker of Padua," and "A Troubled Heart." In the former, with the combination of the twentieth century man of culture and the simple, unquestioning faith of the peasant of the ninth century he tells of the Saint he loved—Saint Anthony, and the miracles he performed. No unbeliever he! Out of the largeness of his own soul and its childlike simplicity he poured his belief: God is great, God is loving, God is tender, God is our Father, and to bless His children He will allow His devoted servants to do any wonderful thing they will. "A Troubled Heart and How it was Comforted at Last," was such a childlike outpouring of the soul before God and man that its very simplicity brought tears to the eyes of at least one reader, not one of his accepted faith, yet one to whom the sweet and tender confidences came with vividness and power.

In this one-sided glance at Mr. Stoddard's work I have mentioned eight books—all of them prose and all possessed of this personal charm. Yet, strange to say,

Charles Warren Stoddard

he began his literary life as a poet, and as a poet he was always known. This is the more remarkable when it is recalled that for many, many years he scarce wrote a line of poetry. Just a few times between the years of, say, 1876 and 1905 he tempted the muse, otherwise all he wrote and published was prose. But what kind of prose? Oh, that I had the space of a dozen booklets of this size to call the attention of its readers to the richness of his prose! I have been, in my half century of life, not a lazy reader of the best our language affords of poetry and prose, yet it has been seldom that I have found such thrilling satisfaction as has often been given to me in reading what Stoddard has written. Take, for instance, his description of a skylark singing, heard as he walked from Stratford-on-Avon to Shotton, and given on pages 80, 81 and 82 of "Exits and Entrances." I have read Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark," both in solitude and to many and varied audiences, and every student knows its rich and exuberant poesy. Its play of fancy sets it apart as one of the purest and richest of England's many fine poems. Yet here comes Stoddard, a stranger to England, a Californian, and in prose as rich, florid, eloquent, and pure as is Shelley's poetry, he gives a literally true description—not a poetic fancy—of the bird whose singing rivaled that of the mocking-bird he knew so well. This description is chosen to open the series of California Clas-

sics. It is worthy of perpetuation in most beautiful form, and this is an humble attempt to give it a proper place in our literature.

But it is not alone to its poetic quality that his prose owes its charm, nor to that rich personal touch to which I have given such prominence. Another quality, almost equally insistent with these is always present, and that is his quaint, unexpected humor. Just as a laughing child likes to peer suddenly out of hidden corners and cry, "Boo!" so does Stoddard thrust his sly wit and subtle humor before you.. And it is both sly and subtle.. Yet never meanly sly, or harsh. Never did he say an unkind word, or an impure one. Humor that bordered on the vulgar, or that relied for its interest upon an unclean double entendre never found place on Stoddard's pages. He has no objection to giving his chapters titles that seem to be most suggestive of strange and awkward situations, but he does it all as simply and unconsciously as a tiny child will come into a crowded guest-room clad only in her night-robe to bid her papa and mamma "Good night!" And if the prurient pick up his books and begin to read these chapters expecting something risque they finish every word of them and put the book aside with the fever of impurity quenched and filled with a new refreshment and satisfaction that comes

from the chaste, the sweet, the wholesome and the good, given with childlike frankness and ingeniousness.

Of his poetry I might write almost as much as of his prose, especially if I were to present it from the purely Californian standpoint. He was one of the first, as he was one of the keenest, of observers in the new land, with the power of expression to tell in vivid and rich verse that which he saw and felt. His early poems, written in the 'seventies and collected and edited by Bret Harte might well be used as studies of California scenery and climate. Even in those early days he was a coiner of rich phrases. Here are a few taken from his first published poem in the Overland Monthly for July, 1860. It is entitled: "In the Sierras."

"The misty girdle of the hills of God."

"My good horse cast the snow-seals from his hoofs."

"We there beheld

The flowerlike track of the coyote near

The fairy tracery where the squirrel skipped

Graceful and shy, and farther on we saw

The smooth divided hollows where the doe

Dropped her light foot and lifted it away;

Anon the print of some designing fox

Or dog's more honest paw; the solid bowls
That held the heavy oxen's spreading hoof;
And suddenly, in awe, the bear's broad palm,
With almost human impress."

I have been led on to quote more than I intended in this poetic description of "tracks." There are not many passages in our literature that display any keener observation and ability to express.

Here are a few more quotable phrases: "The sky's blue vacancy," "The sunny dream of autumn's plentiful and ever-lingering, everlasting peace," "The happy robin's tender tremuli."

His next poem—in the August, 1868, Overland, was on the "Snow Plant," and it can be used as a description, so carefully did he observe and transcribe. In the September issue he gives us "In Clover," and in that occurs this oft-quoted stanza on the bee:

"O little hump-back bumble-bee!
O smuggler! breaking my repose;
I'll slyly watch you now and see
Where all the honey grows."

Charles Warren Stoddard

In the November number he gives "Robinson Crusoe—A Dream of Youth," and in that poem unconsciously reveals his love of the peace and freedom from turmoil that afterwards so lured him to the "Island of Tranquil Delights." Listen:

"O, happy life of simple ways!
O, long recurrence of sweet days!
O, incident of sun and shower,
And great event of opening flower."

And who that loves the robin cannot re-echo two lines of his song in the December Overland?

"O, call me with your warble
Away from sin and woe."

Such were Charles Warren Stoddard's earliest lays.

In speaking of the "style" of Stoddard one other most important feature should not be forgotten. I know of no writer of so-called "profane" literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who uses the Bible so much, and so well. The terse, vigorous, condensed power of this "well of undefiled English" was thoroughly understood by Stoddard, and the draughts he makes upon it are amazing.

He unconsciously explains the reason in one of his books where he says: "On leaving home, my mother's last injunction was to read daily some chapters of my Bible, and this I never failed to do. What solemn hours were mine, alone in my cramped state-room, poring over that wonderful volume, and every day I became more and more perplexed with its histories and mysteries!" This early habit of Bible reading, and, as he calls it, "poring over it," stored his retentive memory with the most perfect phrases in the English language, which, later, transferred bodily to his writings, produced a wonderful effect.

There were six distinct epochs in Mr. Stoddard's life. There were: I. His journey to California when a boy. II. His association with Bret Harte and the other literary giants of California's Golden Age of Literature. III. His first trip to the South Seas. IV. His trips to Europe. V. His occupation of the Chairs of English Literature at Notre Dame, Ind., and the Catholic University, Washington, D. C. VI. His retirement and return to California.

He was born in Rochester, N. Y., August 7, 1843. When twelve years old—his father having already come to California—he and his mother made the journey, across the Nicaraguan Isthmus, from New York to San Francisco. Imagine the twelve-year-old boy, just at the impressionable, adolescent period, and with his

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introspective poetic temperament, taking such a trip; the sudden change from gray-skied New York to the flaming firmament of the near-tropics; the excitement of going aboard a vessel in a great city, the good-byes, the sailing down the coast, the life of the sailors, the storms, the calms, the tropic sea, the first sight of palms and oranges and Indians and all the Isthmian wonders, and then the ship-ride up the Pacific Coast and the landing in weird, wild, excitable San Francisco, just beginning to know that it was going to become a city. No intelligent child could take such a journey and not be affected by it so long as he lived, but to such an one as Stoddard it was epoch-forming. It gave him pictures to brood over, to think about, to dream upon, to describe, and his youthful fancy, thus excited into a tremendous activity, never again slumbered or slept. It was ever wide awake for scenes new and strange, but this taste of the sea and the wild freedom of the life of the Isthmus was never fully satisfied, though he took six or more trips to the Sandwich Islands later on. To this was added the return trip East, taken two years later, with a sick elder brother who was ordered back to the Atlantic shore. This was in a sailing vessel around Cape Horn and took ninety-one days, on only five of which did they see land.

Now for two years he remained in New England; and, perchance, these two

years should be called another distinct epoch in his life. Certainly they were, in the effect they had upon his later years, for in them was formed the conscious dislike for the harsh and austere ceremonies of the faith of his grandfather that ultimately led him into the bosom of the Catholic Church. The experiences of this time are vividly told in the story of his conversion. On his return to California he went to school and then to business, and, while a clerk in a book store, began to write poetry and anonymously send it to the local papers. This led to his discovery by the Reverend Thomas Starr King, that Unitarian preacher of large heart and discerning mind who did so much in the early days of California to help her struggling literary aspirants. He prevailed upon Stoddard to go back to school, which he did, but the habit of poetizing continued, and the Golden Era and the Californian (those early pioneers of California literary magazines) received many of his lines. In those days he made the acquaintance—which to him always meant a permanent friendship—of Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, Mark Twain, Prentice Mulford, Ina Coolbrith, Robert Louis Stevenson, Ambrose Bierce, and others whose names and high places in the literature of the English-speaking peoples none will ever question. Think what this must have meant to all of these gifted minds; all young, all impressionable, all companionable (more or less), all original, all seeking

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the most perfect expression for thoughts about, and descriptions of, this great new Pacific world, with its marvelous strange scenery, its Spanish, Mexican, Mission, Indian, gold-mining, cow-boy, stage-driving, pioneer life. No wonder they wrote and wrote well. The conditions were enough almost to provoke mediocrity into genius, and this little coterie helped each other to do most perfect work. Stoddard tells how he criticized Miller, and how Harte and Miss Coolbrith criticized them both. And such criticism meant the eternal betterment of critic and criticized alike.

Then came the founding of the Overland Monthly. It was Stoddard who suggested to Anton Roman, the founder, the name of Bret Harte as editor, and he and Miss Coolbrith, (who were always devoted friends), were soon so deep in the plans for the success of the new magazine that they were dubbed "The Golden Gate Trinity," and remained such until Harte passed on.

But the fame of writing poetry did not pay Stoddard's bills, and he was compelled to look about for a means of livelihood, and it was thus early in his career that the dramatic profession was urged upon him. For awhile he went on the stage, in buckskin and tinsel, and his experiences, both outward and inward, are deliciously described in "For the Pleasure of His Company." He tells of his

self-discussions as to his permanency at such work; his final abandonment of it; his poverty; pawning and losing his watch; engagement in book-keeping; his flight to the South Seas and his determination to stay there. This South Sea visit was the third great epoch in his life, for it led to the writing of his books on the South Seas—a subject in which he is confessedly the master of the literary world. In vividness of description, wealth of color, rare quaint humor, native appreciation, deep sympathetic insight, they stand unequalled. Turn to any page you will in one of these three volumes and begin to read and you will not lay the book down until the chapter or incident is concluded. Everything is so natural, so spontaneous, so vivid, so naive, that you are charmed, lured, absorbed; and that is evidently the secret of a writer's power.

These books were all written originally as newspaper letters, and their success was so unbounded, that they opened up a new field of endeavor, because they afforded an abundant living, and he was sent to Europe to travel and write for the San Francisco Chronicle and other papers. In this work he saw the Old World and all its leading lights—political, social, literary, scientific, dramatic, editorial—and thus gained that mental aplomb that comes only with such knowledge and personal contact. Yet his plunge into the civilizations of the Old World had such

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an effect upon him that he was compelled to return to his first love—the South Seas—in order to regain the simple content his soul pined for.

Then came a wonderful change. He had already embraced Catholicism, and, to his great surprise, he was offered the professorship of English Literature at the College of Notre Dame, Indiana. He accepted it, and thus entered upon the next distinct epoch of his life. This position he honored and adorned for two years and then he was called to the higher and more responsible post at the Catholic University, Washington, D. C. This was in 1889, and here he remained, doing his work faithfully and well, beloved of students and faculty, visitors and Washington residents, until about 1892, when he resigned, went to live in Cambridge, Mass., and finally yielded to the “call of the West,” and returned to his beloved California.

This was his last change, his final epoch. He did not know this, though he always expressed the hope that he would die in California, but the day and the hour were mercifully kept from his knowledge and that of his friends. One of the last times I saw him he was seriously contemplating a return to the East. His experiences during the great earthquake of 1906 so shattered his nervous system that he felt himself in a state of continuous fear lest another earthquake should come.

It was during this final period that some of his poorest, and also, some of his strongest, work was done. He himself felt keenly his inability to make what he wished to make out of his articles on the "Romance of the Missions," and both in our conversation and correspondence he referred to it with gloom. And yet perhaps nothing he ever wrote, either in prose or poetry, will live longer than his poem on the Bells of San Gabriel. With all the sweep of his old-time, youthful vigor, he describes the Mission in its palmy day, and then demands to know where its power has gone. With a stern "Answer me now, I pray!" he stands before the despoilers of the Indians and the Missions established for them, and then, with the power of an Elijah or Jeremiah, he empties the vials of his wrath as an avenging angel upon them for their vile, degrading theft. But the sad, insistent refrain, rings ever in one's ears, with an onomatopoeic power that is seldom found in any verse.

"And every note of every bell
Sang Gabriel! rang Gabriel!
In the tower that's left the tale to tell,
Of Gabriel, the Archangel!"

In November of 1908 he wrote me:

"Dear Seaceless Wanderer—

"I have crept into a small box of a bungalow to hyburnate. There are for little rooms packed together. A widow, her daughter, a dog and a cat and myself fill the place to repletion. I eat and sleep here and I shall be glad to see you if you will come. * * *

"I'd be all right but for my rhumatism, which often troubles me. Aloha!"

I have italicized three words in this little letter purposely. How we used to laugh over his phonetic spelling! He vowed he never could learn to spell. This proves he was right. Dear old Charlie! Who cared whether you spelled dictionary-wise or not, so long as he might be privileged to receive your letters? In them were condensed the poetry, wisdom, humor, insight, passion, love, of your sweet and beautiful soul. Now we shall receive them no more, but often, in spirit, shall we sit down and wait, feeling out towards your own beautiful spirit until we are filled with its richness and love. For, in this little bungalow, on the sixth of April, 1909, the call for the higher and newer life came to him—the call that all must obey—and the earth lost all but the mortal part of Charles Warren Stoddard.

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This is the last page of the first of the Arroyo Guild's California Classics Series, devoted to the life and works of California authors. The first author presented is Charles Warren Stoddard, of sweet and precious memory. Herein are choice quotations from his works and an humble appreciation by his friend, George Wharton James, who is responsible for this booklet. Done in the year of Our Lord 1909, in the month of November, at the Arroyo Guild Press, 201 Avenue 66 (Garvanza), Los Angeles, California





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